



# Washington State Department of Transportation

Meeting Summary  
Final ESSB 6392 Workgroup Meeting  
Wednesday, Dec. 1, 2010  
3 – 5 p.m.  
Puget Sound Regional Council  
1011 Western Avenue, Suite 500, Seattle

## **Workgroup members:**

- Angie Thomson, Facilitator
- Theresa Doherty, University of Washington
- Mike Fong, Seattle City Council
- David Hull, King County Metro
- Julie Meredith, SR 520 Program
- Bob Powers, Seattle Department of Transportation
- Greg Walker, Sound Transit

## **Welcome and introductions (Angie Thomson)**

Angie Thomson, facilitator, welcomed everyone to the final ESSB 6392 Workgroup meeting and reviewed the agenda. Workgroup members introduced themselves.

## **Recap of Workgroup process (Kerry Ruth)**

Kerry Ruth, I-5 to Medina Project Engineering Manager, led a recap of the ESSB 6392 Workgroup process to date. Ms. Ruth highlighted the work of the ESSB 6392 Workgroup, which was convened as a result of Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill (ESSB) 6392 which was passed by the Washington State Legislature and signed by Governor Gregoire following the 2010 legislative session. A section of this bill directed the formation of workgroups to discuss design refinements, transit connections, transit planning and financing and a Washington Park Arboretum Mitigation Plan. Ms. Ruth explained that in response to ESSB 6392, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has helped to lead the following:

- From July to October 2010, a Workgroup comprised of WSDOT, the City of Seattle, Sound Transit, King County Metro and the University of Washington met to make recommendations on design refinements and transit connections. These recommendations were submitted to the Governor and the Legislature on Oct. 1, 2010.
- From June 2010 to the present, the Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee (ABGC) and WSDOT have been working to develop a Washington Park Arboretum Mitigation Plan.

- From October 2010 to the present, a technical coordination team comprised of technical staff from WSDOT, King County Metro, Sound Transit, the City of Seattle and the University of Washington has been working to develop recommendations on transit planning and financing.
- The public has been invited to provide comments on Workgroup work plans and recommendations through a variety of channels since June of this year. Public comments were received at Workgroup meetings, Seattle City Council meetings, through e-mail, online comment forms and mail.
- After the public comment period from Dec. 1 to Dec. 15, the Workgroup recommendations on transit planning and financing, and the Washington Park Arboretum Mitigation Plan will be submitted to the Governor and the Legislature by Dec. 31, 2010, as directed in ESSB 6392.

([Slides 3-4](#) provide additional information)

**QUESTION:** Can you remind me what the status is of the Montlake Triangle Charrette process?  
(Julie Meredith)

**RESPONSE:** *Since we presented the Montlake Triangle concept to the Workgroup earlier this fall we have been working with the various agency stakeholders to begin implementation of this concept. WSDOT has been working for the past few months with the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT), Sound Transit, King County Metro and the University of Washington, and we've just recently accomplished completing signatures on a term sheet that outlines our agreement to implement the Montlake Triangle concept. This concept includes a grade-separated crossing for pedestrians in the Montlake Triangle area that will blend with the U-Link Station, Rainier Vista plan and SR 520 project connections to the area. So, in summary, the Montlake Triangle project is moving forward, and Sound Transit is currently in process of planning public outreach on this design change.* (Kerry Ruth)

#### **Background and process overview - SR 520 corridor transit planning and financing (Kerry Ruth)**

Ms. Ruth shared background information about SR 520, stating that the SR 520 corridor is a major link between Seattle and the Eastside, and SR 520 connects business and residential centers, as well as major institutions such as the University of Washington. Ms. Ruth added that each weekday, 115,000 vehicles travel across SR 520 and approximately 15,000 passengers ride transit through the corridor. Among the weekday transit trips, 10,000 passengers ride during peak commute periods. Ms. Ruth noted that increases in the Puget Sound region's population and employment centers are expected to result in 40,000 additional trips across SR 520 each day projected in the year 2030.

([Slide 6](#) provides additional information)

Ms. Ruth outlined the process that the high capacity transit planning and financing technical coordination team (Transit TCT) completed as part of ESSB 6392 work effort. Ms. Ruth reminded the Workgroup that ESSB 6392 directed WSDOT to work with Sound Transit and

King County Metro to study and make recommendations regarding options for planning and financing high capacity transit along the SR 520 corridor. Technical staff representatives from these agencies formed the Transit TCT to study options in detail and provide recommendations to the ESSB 6392 Workgroup for review. Ms. Ruth reiterated that the Transit TCT was led by WSDOT, Sound Transit and King County Metro, and included representatives from the city of Seattle and the University of Washington. This group met regularly between October and December 2010, and developed a series of key findings and recommendations for the ESSB 6392 Workgroup to review.

([Slide 7](#) provides additional information)

Ms. Ruth outlined the work plan that the Transit TCT focused on a comprehensive review of the [2008 High Capacity Transit \(HCT\) Plan](#) in order to:

- Review the transit capital and operating improvements.
- Identify potential funding sources for operating and capital plan elements and discuss current funding strategies used by transit agencies.
- Consider the effects of the following:
  - Urban Partnership Agreement funded SR 520 corridor improvements.
  - I-5 to Medina preferred alternative design.
- Update the phasing timeline and milestones to reflect current plans for SR 520 corridor improvements.

([Slide 8](#) provides additional information)

Ms. Ruth explained that through this process, the Transit TCT developed a draft transit planning and financing findings and recommendations report, which is available for public comment until Dec. 15, 2010. Ms. Ruth shared that the report contains the following information:

- Background information outlining the need for high capacity transit in the SR 520 corridor.
- An outline of the Transit TCT's process for developing recommendations.
- Factors affecting high capacity transit on the SR 520 corridor.
- A list of potential example funding sources.
- Key findings.
- Proposed Transit TCT recommendations and next steps.

([Slide 9](#) provides additional information)

### **2008 HCT Plan background and key findings (Candida Lorenzana)**

Candida Lorenzana, King County Metro, provided the Workgroup with a brief overview of the 2008 HCT Plan. Ms. Lorenzana stated that the HCT Plan was published in coordination with King County Metro, Sound Transit, University of Washington and WSDOT in 2008.

Ms. Lorenzana explained that the HCT Plan outlined a strategy for meeting cross-Lake Washington travel demand on SR 520 with an incremental implementation of bus rapid transit

(BRT) service connecting employment, residential areas and activity centers on both sides of Lake Washington. The Transit TCT used the HCT Plan as a foundation of their effort. Ms. Lorenzana explained that the HCT Plan proposed a phased implementation approach for delivering high capacity transit service in the SR 520 corridor, and identified 2016 as the potential start of BRT service. Ms. Lorenzana explained that this start date allows BRT service to take advantage of the continuous transit/HOV lanes planned for SR 520's mainline and on Montlake Boulevard E., and Sound Transit's extension of light rail to the University Station.

Ms. Lorenzana provided several specific details about the 2008 HCT Plan, and noted that the HCT plan:

- Builds on the strong transit markets already in place along the SR 520 corridor.
- Responds to projected increases in transit demand on the SR 520 corridor.
- Defines a phased program for SR 520 bus rapid transit through 2030.
- Envisions an improved multimodal center adjacent to the University of Washington (UW) campus, UW Medical Center and the planed UW Link Light Rail Station.

([Slide 10](#) provides additional information)

Ms. Lorenzana highlighted the following BRT lines that were prioritized in the HCT Plan:

- Redmond/Overlake to downtown Seattle.
- Redmond/Overlake to the University District.
- Eastgate/Bellevue to the University District.

Ms. Lorenzana also noted highlights of other topics included in the HCT Plan, including:

- Suggested capital investments for improving operating efficiency, speed and reliability of service.
- Identification of funding gaps that need to be addressed in order to bring BRT service to the SR 520 corridor.
- The plan also considered other high capacity transit options such as light rail transit (LRT).
- A description of next steps for implementation.

([Slide 11](#) provides additional information)

Ms. Lorenzana reminded the Workgroup that the HCT Plan partner agencies also considered other high capacity transit technologies for the corridor, such as LRT, which will be further evaluated in the Sound Transit 2 (ST2) planning effort.

**COMMENT:** I'd like to clarify something. Of the three BRT lines that the HCT Plan prioritizes, two are already-existing routes, and one route is proposed. With the existing routes, the service investment is already there, and Sound Transit is looking forward to future capital investments to transition all of these routes into BRT. (Greg Walker)

**COMMENT:** One route is there only in a peak form and needs to be expanded. King County Metro agrees. The improvements that the SR 520 program is making will help transit and BRT greatly. (David Hull)

**Factors affecting high capacity transit: SR 520 corridor improvements (Candida Lorenzana)**

Ms. Lorenzana shared with the Workgroup that the SR 520 program includes several elements that will improve transit reliability, including:

- Inside transit/HOV lanes from I-5 to SR 202.
- Transit/HOV direct-access ramps on and off the highway.
- Connections for pedestrians and bicyclists on paths connecting to local and regional bus stops as well as a cross-lake bicycle and pedestrian path along the north side of the bridge.
- Transit/HOV lanes on Montlake Boulevard E.
- Median transit stops on the Eastside at Evergreen Point Road and 92nd Avenue NE.

([Slide 12](#) provides additional information)

**Factors affecting high capacity transit: Lake Washington Urban Partnership Agreement (Candida Lorenzana)**

Ms. Lorenzana provided the Workgroup with an overview of the Lake Washington Urban Partnership Agreement, sharing that in 2007, the United States Department of Transportation awarded a \$154.5 million dollar grant to a partnership between WSDOT, King County Metro, and the Puget Sound Regional Council. This grant funds capital elements of tolling, technology, and transit improvements.

Ms. Lorenzana explained that under this agreement, the partners agree to:

- Implement variable pricing on SR 520 between I-5 and I-405. WSDOT is in the process of implementing tolling on the existing SR 520 facility, with tolling set to begin in spring 2011.
- Use technologies to employ “active traffic management” (such as the Smarter Highways program) along the SR 520 corridor. Active traffic management has been recently implemented on the SR 520 corridor.
- Increase transit capacity along SR 520 by enhancing bus service and improving passenger facilities along the SR 520 corridor.
- Increase the use of telecommuting, flexible scheduling, and employer-based alternative commute programs within the region. These elements are funded locally, and not through this agreement.

([Slide 13](#) provides additional information)

## **Factors affecting high capacity transit: Revenue (Eric Chipps)**

Eric Chipps, Sound Transit, provided an overview of revenue factors affecting high capacity transit. Mr. Chipps explained that transit and transportation agencies have faced a severe decline in revenue as a result of the regional and national economic climate.

Mr. Chipps explained that King County Metro and Sound Transit derive most of their revenue from sales tax revenues, which have diminished in recent years. Mr. Chipps said that recovery to previous levels is expected, but very slowly. As a result, Mr. Chipps explained that existing and planned service levels have had to be adjusted to reflect the change in revenue, and this situation was recognized by the Transit TCT while preparing its draft report.

King County Metro revenues are expected to decline by \$1.17 billion between 2009 and 2015. In order to maintain current service levels, Mr. Chipps explained that King County Metro would need nearly \$334 million. Cuts in King County Metro's services by 15 percent may be needed unless additional resources are identified.

Mr. Chipps explained to the Workgroup that Sound Transit's long-term revenue forecasts show Sound Transit 2 (ST2) funding levels down by about 25 percent, or \$3.9 billion, through 2023. The shortfall has forced the agency to adjust the delivery timeline and scope of the ST2 plan.

Mr. Chipps continued by noting that just as transit agency revenues are declining, so too are the gas tax revenues that WSDOT depends on to help ensure that Washington's highway system operates safely and reliably. Mr. Chipps explained that to date, WSDOT has identified just over half of the needed \$4.65 billion in funding, but WSDOT is continuing to seek ways to fill the \$2 billion gap in funding.

([Slide 14](#) provides additional information)

## **Example potential funding sources for transit (Eric Chipps)**

Mr. Chipps reviewed several potential funding sources for transit. A few of these example funding sources include:

- Toll revenue.
  - Mr. Chipps noted that funding transit using toll revenue would provide stability over time and can be adjusted over time. Mr. Chipps explained that tolling also has a direct relationship to use of the facility.
- Increased local property tax authority.
- Increase in sales and use tax for transit.
  - Mr. Chipps explained that this tax has been fully assessed to the maximum amount authorized. This tax also currently funds most of Metro's and Sound Transit's services.
- Local option motor vehicle excise tax.
- Local sales tax on motor fuels.
- Transit commute mobility tax.



- Federal grants:
  - FTA Section 5307.
  - FTA Section 5309.
  - Surface Transportation Program Regional Grant.
    - Mr. Chipps explained that this grant is currently up for re-authorization. The grant's future funding levels and criteria for funding are unknown at this time, although there is historical record of this grant that can be reviewed.
  - Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Regional Grant.
  - Other federal funds.

Mr. Chipps noted that except for federal grant sources, all potential funding sources that the Transit TCT examined would require some sort of legislative action to implement, either through the state Legislature and/or by a public vote.

Mr. Chipps shared that the Transit TCT observed that transit services require ongoing, reliable and sustainable revenue sources to avoid having to make future cuts in services. While federal grants can provide one-time contributions, they do not bring in consistent and sustainable revenue year after year, and therefore do not offer stability that transit operating budgets need.

([Slide 15](#) provides additional information)

**QUESTION:** The next legislative session is starting soon so when does the project need to have funding sources identified and/or secured for transit so you're in a position to be successful?  
(Bob Powers)

**COMMENT:** Before we can answer that, we need to determine if there's a way to phase implementation more than is outlined in the HCT plan. Is there a way to put service in that benefits passengers in the corridor during construction? Is the schedule for construction completion still 2016? (David Hull)

**RESPONSE:** *Construction on the floating bridge and Eastside is scheduled to be complete by late 2014. In our environmental document, WSDOT has analyzed completing the rest of the corridor by 2018. However, this is the unfunded portion, where we have the \$2 billion gap. In terms of toll revenue, this is already allocated to fund the floating bridge and Eastside projects.*  
(Julie Meredith)

**COMMENT:** It would be wonderful if the Legislature recognized that transit is the relief and mitigation for people who can't afford to cross the lake and pay the tolls on SR 520. (Greg Walker)

**QUESTION:** In summary, would it be fair to say that the Transit TCT used the 2008 HCT Plan as a foundation for its work, and the group has identified a series of factors that have emerged since the HCT Plan, including factors related to design and funding? In essence, what the TCT has been doing is taking this new context to the HCT Plan, identifying any updates and charting a path forward. Did your list of revenue sources get winnowed down to only the most feasible

options? Did this list change from what was listed in the HCT Plan? Did the list originally include more sources? (Mike Fong)

**RESPONSE:** *All of the potential funding sources identified in the HCT Plan are listed in our report. The only addition is the local property tax, which was authorized by the Legislature after the HCT Plan was published in 2008. We did examine whether there were other revenue sources, and there were discussions about other sources in the Transit TCT meetings, but these discussions never made it to our formal list. (Eric Chipps)*

**RESPONSE:** *There was a more exhaustive exercise completed, looking at funding sources in 2008. (Greg Walker)*

### **2010 draft transit planning and financing findings (Eric Chipps)**

Mr. Chipps described the findings outlined by the Transit TCT that are included in the report. These findings include the following:

- The conclusions and recommendations contained in the 2008 HCT Plan are valid.
- The voter-approved 2008 ST2 package includes funding for a long-range feasibility study that will evaluate LRT as a potential transit mode on SR 520 in the future.
  - Mr. Chipps explained that this is especially important to Sound Transit since the purpose of the study would be to inform its board about the ways and costs of accommodating future transit demand on SR 520 beyond what is called for in the HCT Plan, and would be a resource utilized during the development of any future regional transit improvement proposal (an 'ST3') that the board may place before voters.
- Some of the early milestones identified in the 2008 HCT Plan have been completed including:
  - Defined the first phase of the Montlake Multimodal Center.
  - Increased transit service in the SR 520 corridor, including Sound Transit route 542 between Redmond and the University District, and King County Metro is increasing service on routes 255, 265, 271, and 311.
- Completed some of the capital improvements funded by the Urban Partnership Agreement.
  - Mr. Chipps explained that these capital improvements include tolling infrastructure, roadway technology improvements, and other capital improvements.
- Funding for King County Metro, Sound Transit, and WSDOT has been significantly impacted by slow economic conditions in the region.
- Both King County Metro and Sound Transit have levied sales-and-use tax to the maximum allowed.

([Slides 16 - 17](#) provides additional information)



**QUESTION:** To clarify, the HCT Plan recommendation suggests implementation of BRT starting in 2016 through 2030. As part of ST2, funding is provided for a feasibility study that will look at light rail along the SR 520 corridor. When is this study scheduled? (Mike Fong)

**RESPONSE:** *It's not scheduled yet, but 2016 is likely a possibility. It's up to the Sound Transit board to decide when this study will take place, and it's likely the timing of the study would need to occur some time before an ST3 vote, in order to inform our board before they craft an ST3 plan.* (Greg Walker)

**COMMENT:** So the near-term planning horizon with regard to high capacity transit on SR 520 would be the phased implementation of BRT? (Mike Fong)

**RESPONSE:** *Yes, this is correct.* (Greg Walker)

**COMMENT:** The other piece of this is that WSDOT's SR 520 program is still \$2 billion short of being fully funded. Because the funding isn't entirely secured yet, the project still has time to have discussions with Sound Transit and the board, and perhaps the high capacity transit study could be expedited. (Bob Powers)

**RESPONSE:** *Yes, but this would all have to be decided by the Sound Transit board.* (Greg Walker)

### **2010 draft high capacity transit planning and financing recommendations (Candida Lorenzana)**

Ms. Lorenzana highlighted the recommendations from the Transit TCT, pointing out that the Transit TCT considered the 2008 HCT Plan and factors that have impacted the HCT Plan including declines in revenue, the SR 520 preferred alternative and the Lake Washington Urban Partnership Agreement. Ms. Lorenzana explained that the Transit TCT's recommendations include:

- New sustainable revenue sources are needed to support the remaining high capacity transit service and capital improvements in the corridor.
- In the short-term, more funding is needed for an enhanced planning effort to identify and refine the short and mid-term transit needs identified in the HCT Plan.
  - As part of this enhanced planning, Ms. Lorenzana added that there would be an evaluation of how expected changes in transit demand due to tolling, as well as construction and completion of the SR 520 program will affect the phasing and implementation of transit improvements. Ms. Lorenzana shared that parts of this evaluation may already be occurring as many transit agencies already assess service levels, capital needs and service structure.
- Conduct a study that examines the long-term demand for and feasibility of light rail and other high capacity transit technologies along the SR 520 corridor. This study, which is an element of the HCT Plan and a funded project within the voter-approved ST2 package, may not occur until 2016 or later depending on the ST2 implementation schedule.

- Transit service across SR 520 should be monitored, evaluated and adjusted as transit ridership changes. Following the start of Sound Transit's East Link service across I-90, BRT service in the SR 520 corridor may need to be modified to meet demand.
- Any high capacity transit plans developed for SR 520 must complement the planned infrastructure improvements in the SR 520 program.

([Slides 18 - 20](#) provides additional information)

**COMMENT:** To clarify, "funded" means subject to recession, and sales and use tax funding. (Greg Walker)

**COMMENT:** It's important to note that these recommendations and findings will be released today to the public for a comment period between Dec. 1 and 15. Those comments will then be incorporated into the final report that goes to the Legislature at the end of this year. (Kerry Ruth)

Workgroup recommendation: The Workgroup concurred with the Transit TCT's recommendations.

### **Washington Park Arboretum Mitigation Plan – background (Kerry Ruth)**

Ms. Ruth provided the Workgroup with an overview of the Washington Park Arboretum (Arboretum) area, showing a map of the property, in relation to the SR 520 project area.

Ms. Ruth continued by explaining that as part of the ESSB 6392 legislation, WSDOT was directed to consult with the governing board of the Arboretum to develop a mitigation plan for effects of the SR 520: I-5 to Medina project.

Ms. Ruth shared that as part of WSDOT's final environmental impact statement (FEIS), the SR 520 project as a whole is evaluating all environmental impacts and mitigation opportunities, including those to the Arboretum. Each impact will be described in the FEIS, which is planned for release in spring 2011. Details about this mitigation effort with the Arboretum will be included in the FEIS, as well as other mitigation efforts throughout the program.

Ms. Ruth explained that the mitigation plan that the team developed describes the existing conditions of the Arboretum, WSDOT's coordination process in working with the Arboretum, WSDOT's anticipated effects to the Arboretum from the I-5 to Medina project, recommended mitigation measures, and a plan for implementing these mitigation measures while working with the Arboretum and SDOT. Ms. Ruth reiterated that mitigation measures identified in the Arboretum mitigation plan will be part of the FEIS released in spring 2011.

Ms. Ruth explained that the Arboretum was established in 1934, and SR 520 was constructed through a portion of the Arboretum in the 1960s, prior to the development of the regulations that currently exist to protect environmental resources.

Ms. Ruth shared that WSDOT identified the Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee (ABGC) as the lead organization for consulting on Arboretum mitigation, and that the ABGC is an advisory committee for the Arboretum, comprised of representatives from the city of Seattle,

the University of Washington, the Arboretum Foundation and a representative from the Washington State Governor's office.

([Slides 22 - 25](#) provides additional information)

### **Potential mitigation projects (Kerry Ruth)**

Ms. Ruth explained that through coordination over the last several months with the ABGC, the SR 520: I-5 to Medina project was able to identify where the preferred alternative can avoid and minimize effects to the Arboretum as well as potential mitigation opportunities. Many of these mitigation opportunities are projects that have been identified in the Arboretum Master Plan.

Ms. Ruth shared that the Arboretum Mitigation Plan will include details about how the preferred alternative will minimize effects, and outline any remaining effects. Through the mitigation process, WSDOT worked with the ABGC to define a mitigation package for the Arboretum that is in line with the Arboretum Master Plan. The series of projects for mitigation include:

- Improvements to Foster Island.
  - Ms. Ruth explained that before this area was a park, Foster Island was used as a traditional cultural area for Native American tribes. WSDOT is working with the tribes in this area to address their concerns to protect this cultural property. The tribes must concur with any proposed improvements. The area included in this project is outside of WSDOT's right of way.
- Enhancing aesthetics and landscaping at Foster Island crossing.
  - Ms. Ruth explained that this mitigation piece will also require tribal concurrence. The area included in this project is within WSDOT's right of way on Foster Island.
- Restoring the WSDOT Peninsula.
  - As part of the preferred alternative, the SR 520 on and off ramps are being removed through the Arboretum. Ms. Ruth explained that WSDOT is working with the Arboretum on this area, and will restore the wetlands and buffers within the WSDOT Peninsula area.
- Adding improvements to the North Entry.
  - Ms. Ruth explained that this improvement was identified in Arboretum Master Plan before the preferred alternative was in place. WSDOT will continue working with the Arboretum to define how the north entry will be updated once SR 520 ramps are removed.
- Improving wetlands along Arboretum Creek.
  - Ms. Ruth noted that wetland areas are located within the Arboretum, and WSDOT will work to improve these wetlands.
- Improving the Azalea Way Pond.
  - Ms. Ruth shared that WSDOT is planning to restore the hillside seep wetland above the Azalea Way pond, and plant species in the area consistent with the Arboretum Master Plan.
- Developing a multi-use trail.

- Ms. Ruth explained that a multi-use trail could connect to the new Montlake Lid and other enhanced bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
- Implementing components of the Arboretum Interpretive and Wayfinding Plan.
- Reducing noise.
  - Ms. Ruth noted that several noise reduction strategies will be implemented through the preferred alternative. These include the installation of 4-foot barriers with noise absorptive materials, the installation of quieter concrete through the corridor, and an elevated SR 520 roadway through the Arboretum.

Ms. Ruth pointed out that WSDOT will coordinate with the ABGC to scope these projects beginning in spring 2011 and will create an implementation strategy to implement these mitigation projects in line with the rest of the SR 520 project.

Finally, Ms. Ruth explained that traffic may increase in the Arboretum in the future as a result of growth in the region. This increase in traffic would not be a result of the SR 520 project. WSDOT has been working closely with SDOT and will continue to collaborate to define traffic calming and mitigation measures through the Arboretum.

**QUESTION:** Who is the final arbiter of those discussions with the tribes? Who concurs that you have done enough mitigation and can move on? (Greg Walker)

**RESPONSE:** *Per our environmental document, WSDOT is co-leading these mitigation efforts with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The FHWA is the federal entity leading this process. As they are the lead of the environmental document and what mitigation is necessary to complete this project, they will ultimately make that final call. (Kerry Ruth)*

**QUESTION:** Is the mitigation process subject to review by other federal departments? Tribal governments? (Greg Walker)

**RESPONSE:** *Yes, there are other resource agencies involved in this process who may review this process. (Theresa Doherty)*

**RESPONSE:** *Under Section 106, we work with the tribal governments on potential impacts to cultural resources. This process becomes part of the NEPA documentation and FHWA, as the lead federal agency on the project, is responsible for ensuring compliance. We also work closely with other federal and state agencies during the permitting process. These measures ensure that we have properly consulted with the tribes and complied with the mitigation regulations in place. (Kerry Ruth)*

### **Pedestrian improvements and traffic calming update (Jennifer Wieland)**

Jennifer Wieland, Seattle Department of Transportation, led the Workgroup in a discussion of pedestrian improvements and traffic calming opportunities in the Arboretum area. Specifically, Ms. Wieland shared that:

- The I-5 to Medina project preferred alternative will enhance non-motorized mobility and connections to the Arboretum, thereby resulting in increased Arboretum use by pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Over the long term, traffic calming measures could reduce traffic speeds, potentially contributing to increased pedestrian and bicyclist safety in the Arboretum.
- Since this topic was first introduced at a Workgroup meeting on Aug. 19, SDOT has worked with WSDOT and the ABGC to recommend the following potential pedestrian safety and traffic calming improvements in the Arboretum:
  - Create marked crosswalks at two locations to provide visibility at areas frequently used by pedestrians.
  - Install radar speed signs to educate drivers and reduce speeds through the Arboretum.
  - Construct a raised crosswalk in one location to reduce vehicle speeds and improve pedestrian visibility.
  - Create speed cushions in two locations to reduce vehicle speeds.
  - Install a landscaped curb bulb to reduce vehicle speeds, increase pedestrian safety, and provide a connection to Arboretum character.
  - Implement sign improvements to improve clarity and direct traffic to arterial streets.
  - Consider the installation of a pedestrian-activated signal to enhance crossing conditions.

Ms. Wieland continued by saying that SDOT has begun to prioritize these projects and that WSDOT plans to contribute \$200 thousand to traffic calming measures that SDOT can implement as early as spring 2011. Implementing these measures in advance of I-5 to Medina project construction could offset some of the temporary impacts to pedestrian mobility and traffic management anticipated during construction.

Ms. Wieland shared that SDOT will begin to implement these improvements in phases, starting in early 2011 with marked crosswalks and the installation of speed cushions. Ms. Wieland explained that a landscaped curb bulb, a raised crosswalk, and additional improvements will be installed beginning in summer 2011, as additional funding becomes available through the state's next biennial budget.

([Slide 26](#) provides additional information)

**QUESTION:** Have you considered increased traffic enforcement through the Arboretum?  
(David Hull)

**RESPONSE:** *Yes. Enforcement and education are two important parts of a comprehensive traffic calming plan. The information that I am presenting today only represents the infrastructure pieces of a traffic calming plan. SDOT is committed to working with the Seattle Police Department and others to discuss the possibility of increased traffic enforcement through the Arboretum, but this isn't funded yet. (Jennifer Wieland)*

## **Traffic management plan update (Jennifer Wieland)**

Ms. Wieland introduced the traffic management topic by saying that although the SR 520 I-5 to Medina project would reduce traffic volumes on Lake Washington Boulevard E. in 2030 compared to a no-action alternative, projected traffic volumes are expected to be higher than existing. The additional traffic by the year 2030 would occur as a result of projected regional growth in population and employment that is independent from the project.

Ms. Wieland continued by explaining the list of traffic management opportunities that SDOT has identified. These include:

- Tolling.
- Signal timing modifications.
- Turning restrictions.
- Time-based restrictions.
- Signing revisions.

Ms. Wieland explained that SDOT has begun to evaluate signal timing at Lake Washington Boulevard E. and E. Madison Street and will continue this work in early 2011.

Ms. Wieland noted that SDOT's goal is to implement traffic calming measures first, and then examine how tolling of the SR 520 corridor affects traffic volumes on Lake Washington Boulevard E. SDOT and WSDOT will then conduct further studies, likely in 2012.

([Slide 27](#) provides additional information)

**QUESTION:** With the priorities you've mentioned, is everyone on the same page about priorities and timelines for these improvements? Did these priorities come out of your discussions with the ABGC, and is the ABGC in agreement with your implementation schedule? (Bob Powers)

**RESPONSE:** *Yes, and we are sitting back down with the ABGC to confirm locations and priorities with them. Additionally, there is a memorandum of understanding in development that will lay that out more clearly. (Jennifer Wieland)*

**QUESTION:** One concept that the City Council expressed interest in is the layered approach to meet traffic management objectives over time. Is a layered approach to traffic management viable? (Mike Fong)

**RESPONSE:** *It is. For example, traffic calming measures are happening first in 2011. After this, we will examine how those measures and the implementation of tolling impact traffic in the Arboretum. Additionally, we're studying signal timing at certain intersections. We plan to make small changes, one at a time. (Jennifer Wieland)*

**QUESTION:** Is your goal to have a traffic management plan in place by 2012? (Mike Fong)



**RESPONSE:** *We are still working with the ABGC on this, on what the traffic management plan will look like and what is expected. We have developed a matrix of options, locations, benefits and costs. (Jennifer Wieland)*

**QUESTION:** Will the ABGC remain involved as you develop your strategy? (Mike Fong)

**RESPONSE:** *Yes, the ABGC will remain involved. (Jennifer Wieland)*

### **Washington Park Arboretum Mitigation Plan next steps (Kerry Ruth)**

Ms. Ruth provided the Workgroup with an overview of the next steps for the Washington Park Arboretum Mitigation Plan. Ms. Ruth explained that WSDOT, in consultation with the ABGC, has developed a report that is available for public comment from Dec. 1-15. In addition to the release of this plan, Ms. Ruth explained that WSDOT will:

- Continue working with the ABGC to better define the projects identified for implementation.
- Develop a memorandum of agreement.
- Ensure compliance with environmental regulations.
- Facilitate coordination with tribes.
- Coordinate with SDOT to develop a traffic management plan and implementation of traffic calming elements.

([Slide 28](#) provides additional information)

### **Public comment**

Comments below are a summary of the seven verbal comments received at the meeting and are not recorded verbatim.

#### **Comment 1: Larry Levine with the Madison Valley Merchants Association**

I applaud your effort as you are looking at improving traffic, especially at E. Madison Street going to and from the Arboretum. I'd like you to extend the traffic study to look at E. Madison Street that, as traffic speeds can be high. My chief concern is about on- and off-ramps. The current SR 520 off-ramp offers an entry into the Madison Valley business district. I'm concerned that if this ramp is removed, it will be more difficult and inconvenient for people to come to the business district and Madison Park. I can see more people using 23rd Avenue E. if the ramps to the Arboretum are removed, and traffic is already horrible on 23rd Avenue E. Increased traffic following ramp removal will make this street even more dangerous and difficult.

#### **Comment 2: Jorgen Bader with the University District Community Council**

The mitigation plan must include on-site wetland mitigation of the Washington Park Arboretum, and must enhance the Arboretum. This mitigation plan ignores this important piece, required in Chapter 248, Laws of Washington, 2010, Section 2(4)(b)(v). The proposed mitigation plan takes almost 4.77 acres from the Arboretum waterfront trail within the Section 6(f) impact area, and

another two acres of land from the Arboretum that has been part of the Canal Reserve property. The mitigation plan briefly mentions taking a half acre, but neither identifies or offers any replacement land. The WSDOT Peninsula must be returned to the Arboretum as well, as it is very important to the park.

**Comment 3: Paige Miller with the Arboretum Foundation and the Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee**

First, thank you to the WSDOT team that was led by Rob Berman and Kerry Ruth, and the SDOT team led by Stephanie Brown and Jennifer Wieland, as they have really done a fabulous job working with us. Much progress for the Arboretum has been made since mediation began, including having ramps removed from the Arboretum, designs for the preferred alternative are narrower than before, and a list of mitigation projects has been identified and tentatively agreed to. But we still have more to achieve. SR 520 across Foster Island in the Arboretum will be twice as wide as it currently is, and traffic on Lake Washington Boulevard E. will bring greater traffic volumes that we see today, which are already too high. Moving forward, we must consider a traffic management study to reduce traffic on Lake Washington Boulevard E., and WSDOT should assist SDOT to study tolling on Lake Washington Boulevard E. in the future. Additionally, you must continue meeting with the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe on how we will address the area on Foster Island under the new freeway. Finally, additional scoping and negotiations are necessary on specific projects we have identified and tentatively agreed to.

**Comment 4: Sean Riley, E. Lake Washington Boulevard resident**

Please extend traffic calming to where people live on E. Lake Washington Boulevard. Most of the traffic calming and management plans discussed today are only for Lake Washington Boulevard E., and I noticed that there is no plan to extend traffic calming to the area of E. Lake Washington Boulevard between E. Miller Street and Montlake Boulevard E. It's wonderful to help traffic in the Arboretum, but people live nearby, and we're neglecting any traffic calming measures for the neighborhood. Additionally, I'd like to see the left turn on 24th Avenue E. eliminated or metered.

**Comment 5: John Barber with the Leschi Parks and Green Space Committee**

"The Wedge" (WSDOT Peninsula) should be returned to the Arboretum as part of this mitigation process. This fits under Sections 4(f) and 6(f) and the city of Seattle's Initiative 42, and returning this piece of land should be a priority.

Additionally, please prioritize measures to keep SR 520 traffic out of the Arboretum. To do this, do not restore the left turn on 24th Avenue E. By reducing traffic, you will allow for better traffic conditions on 23rd Avenue E. and Montlake Boulevard E. Constructing the second bascule bridge will also improve traffic in this region. Overall, improvements to the 23rd Avenue E. and Montlake Boulevard E. area are very important.

## **Comment 6: Fred Hoyt with the University of Washington Botanic Gardens and the Arboretum and Botanical Garden Committee**

Thank you to the WSDOT and SDOT team, as this has been a very cooperative and collegial process. We worked hard on the mitigation plan as a group, and I think it's been done very well.

Through implementation of the mitigation projects, the UW will have the opportunity to engage faculty and students, and this could be a very positive thing. Also, I'd like to clarify that not all of the impacts to the Arboretum can be mitigated within the Arboretum. The I-5 to Medina project also proposes to mitigate at the UW's Union Bay Natural Area.

There are still many details that are being worked out in scoping, and Lake Washington Boulevard E. continues to be of concern to us. That road was only designed for 4,000 cars a day, and it divides the Arboretum in half. I'm hoping that through the traffic management plan, we can resolve some of these issues.

## **Comment 7: Larry Sinnott with Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks**

With many of your SR 520 improvements, you're negatively impacting the Arboretum.

I was curious to hear you mention a multimodal center. Is this the transit stop on top of the lid? If so, it's really only an annex, because your light rail is 2,000 feet away. If it is a multimodal center, it comes at high cost to the Arboretum, as it means more lanes over Marsh Island, more impacts over water, and more shoreline impacts. Allowing left turns from the Montlake Lid to Montlake Boulevard E. is not good. I believe that southbound traffic on Montlake Boulevard E. will remain congested, which negatively impacts the Arboretum.

Additionally, eliminating the southbound bus island and moving the bus stop near the Hop-In Grocery will bog down traffic and also impact the Arboretum. A new light will be in place during construction at the west end of the off-ramp at Montlake Boulevard E. This light will lower traffic through the Arboretum, and should be made permanent. If it isn't made permanent, then tolling should be considered as a way to reduce traffic through the Arboretum. Finally, I'm also concerned about encroachments to medians on Montlake Boulevard E.

## **Next steps: ESSB 6392 (Angie Thomson)**

Ms. Thomson outlined the next steps for the ESSB 6392 Workgroup report. These include:

- **Transit planning and financing recommendations report:**
  - Dec. 1-15: Public comment period
  - Dec. 31: Final Workgroup recommendations submitted to the Governor and Legislature; WSDOT plans to submit the reports on Dec. 22.
- **Washington Park Arboretum Mitigation Plan:**
  - Dec. 1-15: Public comment period
  - Dec. 31: Final Workgroup recommendations submitted to the Governor and Legislature.

([Slide 30](#) provides additional information)

- **For more information, please contact:**
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  - Or visit WSDOT's ESSB 6392 webpage.

([Slide 31](#) provides additional information)